

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/WE:JFDOBBINS:JF

APPROVED BY EUR/WE - EMROWELL

S/P:ADEPORTE

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 207976

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, PINT, PGOV

SUBJECT: DISSENT CHANNEL MESSAGE: USG RELATIONS WITH THE  
FRENCH LEFT

1. RESPONSE TO DISSENT CHANNEL MESSAGE OF JOHN R. DOBRIN  
(PARIS 21979 OF JULY 29) HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY POLICY  
PLANNING STAFF AND DELIVERED TO MR. DOBRIN IN THE DEPART-  
MENT.

2. FYI: RESPONSE READS AS FOLLOWS:

DEAR MR. DOBRIN: THANK YOU FOR YOUR TELEGRAM OF JULY 29 IN  
THE DISSENT CHANNEL. MEMBERS OF THE POLICY PLANNING STAFF  
AND OTHER OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH  
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FRENCH AFFAIRS HAVE CAREFULLY REVIEWED THE CONSIDERATIONS  
YOU RAISE IN SUPPORT OF YOUR VIEW THAT THE US SHOULD AVOID  
TOO CLOSE A CONNECTION WITH THE GISCARD-GAULLIST COALITION  
AND SHOULD VISIBLY INCREASE ITS TIES WITH THE SOCIALIST  
PARTY.

3. THERE ARE NO ILLUSIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE DIFFI-

CULTIES CONFRONTING GISCARD AND HIS PRESENT GOVERNMENT; OR  
ABOUT THE FACT THAT A DEFEAT OF THE LEFT COALITION MAY BE

WIDELY VIEWED AS AT LEAST AS MUCH A CHIRAC AS A GISCARD  
VICTORY; OR ABOUT THE PROBLEMS A GAULLIST-DOMINATED GOVERN-  
MENT MIGHT CAUSE US. NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THIS, THE JUDG-  
MENT HAS BEEN REACHED AS A BASIS FOR POLICY THAT EVEN A  
GAULLIST-DOMINATED GOVERNMENT UNDER A GISCARD PRESIDENCY  
IS LIKELY TO BE MORE COMPATIBLE WITH US INTERESTS THAN A  
SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST COALITION GOVERNMENT. THIS IS SO EVEN  
IN LIGHT OF THE STRONG CASE THAT MIGHT BE MADE THAT THE  
FASTEST ROAD TO A REVIVAL OF CENTRISM IN FRANCE, WHICH  
MIGHT SERVE BOTH FRENCH AND US INTERESTS, MAY LIE -- ALBEIT  
OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS -- IN A VICTORY OF THE LEFT COALI-  
TION AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DISINTEGRATION RATHER THAN THROUGH  
A VICTORY OF THE RIGHT.

4. IT IS THE JUDGMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT A VICTORY OF THE  
LEFT IS LIKELY TO HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN POLICY WITH  
WHICH WE WOULD HAVE PROBLEMS AND DOMESTIC POLICIES WHICH  
COULD PROVE MORE DESTABILIZING, IN A POLARIZED FRANCE, THAN  
WOULD A DEFEAT OF THE LEFT. YOU ARE FAMILIAR, I AM SURE,  
WITH THE WIDELY HELD VIEWS ABOUT THE POTENTIALLY DISTURBING  
EFFECTS OF A LEFT VICTORY ON FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE  
CONCERN THAT IT MIGHT CONSTITUTE AN "EXAMPLE" IN ITALY, A  
BLOW TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC'S SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN A  
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WESTERN EUROPE OF MORE OR LESS LIKE-MINDED REGIMES, AND A  
THREAT TO THE STRANDS OF ATLANTIC AND EUROPEAN COOPERATION  
WHICH HAVE BEEN THE BASIS OF WESTERN SECURITY AND PROS-  
PERITY FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS.

5. ON THE DOMESTIC SIDE, TO WHICH YOU DEVOTE MOST OF YOUR  
ATTENTION, FEW WOULD DISPUTE YOUR VIEW THAT THERE IS A  
STRONG DEMAND IN FRANCE FOR CHANGE AND REFORM AND THAT  
THERE ARE RISKS IN FRUSTRATING THAT DEMAND INDEFINITELY.  
ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU DEEMPHASIZE THE DIFFICULTIES THAT A  
LEFT GOVERNMENT WILL FACE IN TRYING TO CARRY OUT REFORMS.  
STRONG INTERESTS HAVE BLOCKED THEM FOR YEARS AND WILL NOT  
LIKE THEM ANY BETTER FROM A LEFT GOVERNMENT. ONE CAN FORE-  
SEE FLIGHT OF CAPITAL, LOWER INVESTMENT AND OTHER REACTIONS  
WHICH, IN THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE, COULD HAVE DISAS-  
TROUS EFFECTS ON FRANCE'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN DOMESTIC  
ORDER AND CARRY OUT ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.

6. THE UNITED STATES WOULD WELCOME REFORMS THAT COULD HELP  
REDUCE THE SHARP POLARIZATION OF THE COUNTRY. WE RECOGNIZE  
THE OBSTACLES TO GISCARD'S ACHIEVING SUCH REFORMS. BUT  
THE PRESENT LEFT COALITION, PARTLY BECAUSE IT INCLUDES THE

COMMUNISTS, SEEMS UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO CARRY THROUGH MEANINGFUL CHANGE EXCEPT AT A COST IN INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY WHICH WOULD BE EXCESSIVE IN TERMS OF FRANCE'S AS WELL AS OUR OWN INTERESTS. IT IS A QUESTION OF WEIGHING

RISKS AND MAKING CHOICES AMONG THEM.

7. FOR THESE REASONS, OUR COURSE IS TO IMPLEMENT THE GENERAL POSITION WHICH HAS BEEN SET OUT BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY: NAMELY, TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE US IS NOT INTERFERING IN FRENCH INTERNAL AFFAIRS BUT THAT IT IS NOT INDIFFERENT TO DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MIGHT GIVE THE COMMUNIST PARTY A MAJOR SHARE IN FRANCE'S GOVERNMENT. WE RECOGNIZE THAT FRANCE IS PERHAPS THE EUROPEAN COUNTRY MOST

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NEARLY IMMUNE TO US INFLUENCE. BUT EVERYONE AGREES THAT THE ELECTION WILL BE CLOSE. SIGNS OF US ESTEEM FOR THE Giscard REGIME MIGHT HAVE SOME MARGINAL BUT POSSIBLY IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE ELECTION; AN APPARENT WEAKENING OF US CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF ENHANCED COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN FRANCE COULD ALSO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ELECTION.

8. WITH RESPECT TO YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MITTERRAND HAS RECONSIDERED HIS PLANS TO COME TO THE US. MITTERRAND MAY BE DISAPPOINTED THAT WE WERE NOT ABLE TO COMMIT THE PRESIDENT TO A MEETING, ALTHOUGH OTHER SENIOR US OFFICIALS WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE, BUT HE DOES NOT APPEAR DISPOSED TO MAKE A PUBLIC ISSUE OF THE MATTER. NEITHER ARE WE.

9. IN FRANCE OUR EMBASSY HAS A CLEAR MANDATE TO MAINTAIN AND, TO THE EXTENT COMPATIBLE WITH OUR OVERALL POLICY, TO EXPAND OUR CONTACTS WITH THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS AT ALL LEVELS. THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS YOU MADE IN THIS REGARD ARE AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY AND MAY WELL BE OF ASSISTANCE TO THEM.

10. THIS RESPONSE TO YOUR MESSAGE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL THOSE WHO RECEIVED IT AND TO THE EMBASSY IN PARIS.  
SINCERELY YOURS, PAUL H. KREISBERG, ACTING DIRECTOR, POLICY PLANNING STAFF. CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**To:** PARIS  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009